



Third Way founder Matt Bennett, standing left, and INL Lab Director John Grossenbacher moderated the executive session discussion at the New Millennium Nuclear Energy Summit in Washington D.C.

Administration leaders at summit: Nuclear can help achieve clean energy goals

By [Doug Taylor](#), *INL Communications & Governmental Affairs*

A rare meeting of the minds occurred in the nation's capital recently. Representatives with diverse interests and goals met to have a frank discussion aimed at forging a consensus and path forward on a difficult but critical issue: the nation's secure energy future.

Energy policy makers from the Obama administration, congressional leaders and top-level executives from utilities and energy companies convened at the [New Millennium Nuclear Energy Summit](#) in Washington, D.C. Their mission: to initiate development of a long-term strategy aimed at building a public- and private-sector consensus to identify the path forward for nuclear energy in the U.S.

The Dec. 7 summit was sponsored by Idaho National Laboratory, the nation's lead nuclear energy lab, and [Third Way](#), a Washington-based think tank.

The full-day meeting was divided into two sessions: a morning "roundtable" that featured an open and candid discussion between the public and private sectors, and afternoon working groups that will set the agenda and develop the recommendations to be featured in a report due out in early 2011.

The more immediate product of the summit will be a white paper that sets the multi-decade agenda for the development of nuclear energy. Third Way and INL developed a draft white paper that provided participants with background and an overview of issues discussed at the summit. Ideas that were raised during the morning session will be incorporated into the final version of the topical paper, which participants expect to be finalized by January 2011.

INL Lab Director John Grossenbacher and Third Way founder Matt Bennett facilitated the morning discussion. Sens. [Tom Carper](#) (D-DE), [George Voinovich](#) (R-OH) and [Jim Risch](#) (R-ID), and [Rep. Mike Simpson](#) (R-ID) voiced support for creating a long-term nuclear energy strategy.



The summit convened Obama administration energy policy makers, congressional leaders, and utility and energy company executives to discuss nuclear energy's path forward.



At the summit, Energy Secretary Steven Chu highlighted the important role nuclear power could play in the country's energy future.

In discussing the long term strategy, Grossenbacher said the private sector's role in getting technology deployed in the country is important but, "I would like to emphasize it's not just technology, of course, it's policy and regulation."

[Secretary of Energy Steven Chu](#) and White House Energy Advisor Carol Browner highlighted the important role nuclear power could play in the country's energy future. Browner also cited the importance of the nuclear energy industry to the nation's competitiveness.

"We were once at the forefront of this industry," she said. "We need to recapture that dominant position, and there's every reason to think we can."

Industry executives supported the development of a long-term strategy, a clean energy standard and a clean energy bank that would include funding for nuclear energy projects. Industry participants added many other ideas:

- A federal integrated resource plan that would essentially form a national energy policy that would be consistent from administration to administration.
- Recognition that major front-end investments in capital-intensive energy sources such as nuclear energy and hydro will yield low operating costs for decades.
- Clean energy parks can address siting issues for a variety of clean energy sources.

- Recognition that investments in U.S. nuclear energy plants will provide a platform for increased exports and serve as a stimulus with results — jobs and clean air energy.

The afternoon working group meetings, in which a small subset of representatives from government and industry convened to chart a path forward, focused on four topic areas critical to the future of nuclear energy. Those topics were:

- Public-private partnerships: What role can industry leaders play in working with government to advance the nuclear energy industry and provide clean energy for the nation?
- Finance: What are the major challenges to funding nuclear energy projects and what are the proper financing vehicles to provide the long-term capital these projects require?
- New technology: What new technologies are over the horizon, and how should the U.S. allocate funding to research efforts?
- Infrastructure development: What must industry do now so that the often-mentioned nuclear renaissance can take hold and advance once financing and other considerations are in place?

The summit working groups — composed of 20 to 30 deputies of the morning session's primary decision-makers — dedicated their efforts to group charters that would guide development of content for the final report. Each group will pursue its follow-up actions and report to co-chairs Grossenbacher and Bennett in advance of the summit report. The "final product" of the nuclear summit will be a framework describing how best to restart the nuclear energy industry in this country. The summit and working groups are the process that provides structure to produce results.

"INL and Third Way are continuing substantive conversations through the four working groups," said Grossenbacher. "These working groups will provide more details to the framework, which will be released in the spring."

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White House Energy Advisor Carol Browner cited the importance of the nuclear energy industry to the nation's competitiveness.